



Washington State Senate

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September 9, 2011

The Honorable Bernie Warner, Secretary
Department of Corrections
PO Box 41100, Mail Stop 41100
Olympia, WA 98504-1100

Re: Executive Ethics Board Decision – Termination of Belinda Stewart

Dear Secretary Warner:

In light of today's findings and decision by the Executive Ethics Board, I am writing to respectfully request that you terminate Belinda Stewart's employment with the Department, effective immediately.

I do not make this request lightly. As I made clear in the initial complaint against Ms. Stewart, and as I have discussed with you on several occasions, I believe that Ms. Stewart's unethical behavior was extremely serious. At the very least, I believe she exercised exceptionally poor judgment in mixing her state and personal business affairs, and that she regularly misused state resources in support of those personal affairs. It seems that the Executive Ethics Board agrees with my assessment.

While I respect the Board's actions, I am also aware of the limits of its power under the Ethics in Public Service Act. The Board lacks the authority to take any disciplinary action with respect to Ms. Stewart's employment. You, of course, have that authority. More than this, I believe you have an obligation to act. It is important that a strong message be sent to the public that our government takes its ethics responsibilities and oversight of public resources very seriously.

I am following this matter closely both because I believe it is the right thing for me to do as an elected official made aware of wrongdoing, and because I am using this particular case as a basis for possible changes to statutes that might better prevent such abuses in the future. I expect to introduce legislation in January which draws upon the lessons learned from this experience and works to tighten the law in this regard. I would be happy to have discussions with you about this legislation, and, as always, I welcome your ideas and input.

Secretary Bernie Warner
September 9, 2011
Page 2

With today's opinion and Ms. Stewart's termination, I believe that an ugly chapter of the Department's history can be closed and we can put the matter behind us, returning our focus back to making our criminal justice system and the Department better serve our state in the future. Thank you for your consideration and assistance with this difficult matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Carrell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Mike Carrell
Washington State Legislature
28th Legislative District